DDF Annual Report

Title of Investigation:

Interactive Career Information Web Resource

Principal Investigator:

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Other In-house Members of the Team:

Donald Wolford (Code 120) and Katherine Bender (Code 400)

External Collaborators:

June Streckfus, Executive Director, Maryland Business Roundtable for Education

Initiation Year:

FY 2004

Aggregate Amount of Funding Authorized in FY 2003 and Earlier Years:

$0

Funding Authorized for FY 2004:

$25,000

Actual or Expected Expenditure of FY 2004 Funding:

In-house: $5,000; Grants: $20,000 (Maryland Business Roundtable for Education) for web integration and design

Status of Investigation at End of FY 2004:

To be continued in FY 2005 with an additional $25,000 in FY 2005 Director's Discretionary Fund (DDF) money

Expected Completion Date:

July 2005

Purpose of Investigation:

The purpose of this proposal was threefold: (1) develop an innovative and informative career-focused Web resource for 8th and 9th grade students in Maryland; (2) design a site that attracted first-time and repeat visitors and was integrated with a teen Web site, which the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education developed for state-wide use; and (3) develop an aerospace component for the Maryland state Web site to excite students about NASA-related careers.

Accomplishments to Date:

The Web site was created by the Maryland Business Roundtable and featured four NASA employees. The site demonstrated the use of video streaming to provide background information about each employee, including interviews and demonstrations of their work at NASA. The demonstration site was developed in conjunction with a teen advisory committee and a teen Web steering committee of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education. The development effort also engaged a team of NASA employees involved in the NASA Accelerated Leadership Program. These individuals worked with the Roundtable throughout the year as part of their team project and also provided advice to the Goddard Space Flight Center Education Office on next steps. The Web site is currently available at www.bewhatIwanttobe.com. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the year's work was that Goddard collaborated with outside organizations rather than developing material for use only on its own Web sites. This helps to ensure that the site will be used because the Maryland State Department of Education has endorsed the Web site and encourages all middle school counseling departments to use it.

The Goddard features on the Web site were featured in the Maryland Business Roundtable Annual Report and were recognized at the Roundtable's annual business meeting. Since the Roundtable is made up of CEOs of the largest corporations doing business in Maryland, this recognition was significant.

Planned Future Work:

The next steps of the teen Web effort will include developing a science component and participating in the development of an awards program. With the awards system, students who use the site seriously can accumulate points, which they can turn in for awards. Additionally, Goddard needs to look at a companion site that would serve those who are motivated by the teen Web site and want to become more involved in NASA science through a potential internship. We will focus our energies on completing that in 2005.

Summary:

This constitutes a major effort to incorporate NASA content within a larger effort and to use Web technology as a way to inspire youth. It will engage businesses and government agencies and it focuses on middle school students — a group NASA has targeted in its educational outreach efforts. The payoff to Goddard is directly related to the NASA mission of inspiring the next generation of explorers and encouraging students to pursue careers in subjects important to NASA. The criteria for success are the six criteria established by the NASA Education Office. Programs must: (1) include a customer focus, (2) include NASA content, (3) increase the number of students pursing technical careers, (4) offer diversity, (5) offer sustainability, and (6) be evaluated. Technical risk factors include whether a Web site can actually influence students in grades 8 and 9 to take courses in Algebra and other higher-level math and science courses during the early years of high school. The Web-based component of the program needs to be directly linked to a systemic approach to career exploration and development. It should include personal contact and counseling, not just passive reliance on a Web site.